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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a model of a collaborative inservice education program based on the work of a Teacher Corps Project sponsored jointly by the School of Education at Stanford University and a neighboring junior high school in the San Jose Unified School District. In this model, the power to determine the content of the inservice program resides with the teachers and, because literature reviews have shown that teachers themselves are better inservice educators than administrators and professors, the teachers are also the inservice educators. A case study is used to describe the model and provides a picture of how collaboration between universities and schools can and did take place. Implementation of the model involves: (1) briefing the relevant community on the inservice topic, outlining its dimensions, and correcting any misconceptions; (2) identification of needs by teachers, administrators, parents, students, and inservice educators; (3) summarizing and cataloguing pertinent literature; (4) obtaining additional information from practitioners in the field; (5) selecting and developing appropriate policies; (6) adopting policies; (7) evaluating policies; (8) disseminating information and writing articles for publication. (HM)

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Occasional Paper No. 16

DOWN FROM THE IVORY TOWER: A MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

Susan Stavert Roper and Robert R. Nolan

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Introductory Statement

The mission of the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching is to improve teaching in American schools. Current major operations include three research and development programs--Teaching Effectiveness, The Environment for Teaching, and Teaching and Linguistic Pluralism--and two programs combining research and technical assistance, the Stanford Urban/Rural Leadership Training Institute and the Hoover/Stanford Teacher Corps Project. A program of exploratory and related studies provides for smaller studies not part of the major programs.

This paper is based on part of the authors' work for the Teacher Corps Project funded by the Office of Education and jointly sponsored by Stanford University and Herbert Hoover Junior High School in San Jose, California. It presents a model of collaborative in-service education that describes a step-by-step process for integrating the talents and expertise of school and university personnel. The power over the in-service program resides with teachers. University participants act as resource people and group facilitators to help devise a program that will meet the particular needs of the school staff. The paper is addressed to teacher educators, university faculty, school administrators, and teachers interested in working together to improve in-service education.

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Any strengths in this paper can be attributed to our colleagues at Hoover Junior High School and Stanford University. Responsibility for all errors and omissions is ours alone.

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DOWN FROM THE IVORY TOWER: A MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

Susan Stavert Roper and Robert R. Nolan

There is a crowded bandwagon in education today, and educators are leaping aboard with an astounding variety of proposals, programs, and supposed panaceas. It is the in-service education of practicing teachers. The combination of shrinking enrollments and diminishing budgets has drastically reduced hopes of improving schools through the infusion of "new blood." Practicing teachers no longer see their credentials as passports to job security and geographic mobility. They consider themselves lucky to be employed anywhere and most are holding on, digging in, and staying put. If education is to be improved, the task must be shouldered by teachers who are already on the job.

This paper describes a model of a collaborative in-service education program for teachers. It is based on our work with a Teacher Corps Project sponsored jointly by the School of Education at Stanford University and Herbert Hoover Junior High School, San Jose Unified School District, San Jose, California. In this model the power to determine the content of the in-service program resides with teachers. University faculty and graduate students develop roles as resource people and group facilitators to help teachers devise and implement a program that best meets their particular needs.

The Hoover and Stanford staff members who planned the Teacher Corps Project believed that in-service education would be more effective if teachers had a majority voice in determining the activities in the program. They also believed that assuming responsibility for the direction of the project would promote greater involvement and interest among the teachers. They knew that teachers are wary of in-service education. Too many programs have been poorly planned, underfinanced, and unrelated to the needs of participants.

In the literature attempting to explain this lamentable situation,

two themes recur. The first is that in-service programs have usually been planned and presented by outside experts, not practicing teachers. This seems to be a long-standing tradition: "Even in the last 40 years, little has happened to alter the concept that 'authorities' rather than teachers should determine the purposes, content, and methods of in-service programs."[1] In their review of research on in-service education, Nicholson and Joyce suggest that teachers may be better in-service educators than either administrators or professors.

> There are essentially four categories of persons who generally conducted in-service teacher education programs: the teacher himself, another practicing teacher, a supervisor or administrator, and a university professor. The general trend of the literature indicates that their respective relative success is in the same descending order as they are listed in the previous sentence. A teacher, in other words, may very well be his own best change agent in properly designed inservice teacher education programs. Also very highly regarded are other practicing teachers....[2]

The second theme is that individuals rather than school staffs have been the clients of in-service education. This has been particularly true of the heavily financed NSF and NDEA institutes, which "have plucked a single teacher out of a school district for a summer, a semester, or a year and laid on a course of study in the tradition of a university...." According to Edelfelt and Lawrence, such training has had "little payoff back home in terms of improved school programs. One teacher alone could not change a school...."[3]

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[1]Roy A. Edelfelt and Gordon Lawrence, "In-Service Education: The State of the Art," in Rethinking In-Service Education, ed. Roy A. Edelfelt and Margo Johnson (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975), p. 11.

[2]Alexander M. Nicholson and Bruce R. Joyce with Donald W. Parker and Floyd T. Waterman, "The Literature on Inservice Teacher Education: An Analytic Review," The Inservice Teacher Education Concepts Project Report III, (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics and National Teacher Corps, 1976), p. 21.

[3]Edelfelt and Lawrence, p. 15.

In designing the Hoover/Stanford Teacher Corps Project, great pains were taken to avoid these errors. Hoover staff and Stanford faculty who were involved in writing a proposal for a Teacher Corps Project knew that a program dominated by outside authorities or directed toward only a few teachers would not be effective. Thus they designed a comprehensive, school-wide program in which teachers had the voting majority for most project decisions. Most decisions were made through work/study teams composed of teachers, aides, Hoover administrators, parents, Stanford faculty members, and graduate students. There were eight work/study teams at Hoover: four in subject areas, including language arts, social studies, math, and physical education, and four in the "innovative" areas of bilingual education, multicultural education, community involvement, and utilization of open space. Most of the Hoover staff belonged to two of these work/study teams. Each team also had a faculty advisor from Stanford and a research assistant. Hoover staff members received released time each week for work/study team meetings.

The program was comprehensive, due to both the overlapping membership on the work/study teams and the overlapping concerns of each team. For example, the math, social studies, and language arts work/study teams were very closely coordinated with the work of the Open-Space Work/Study Team, since the teachers in these subject areas were preparing to move into a new open-space facility. While there was a considerable amount of formal and informal coordination between the teams, each had a great deal of autonomy and each functioned somewhat differently.[4] The model of collaborative in-service education we describe is based on our participation in the Open-Space Work/Study Team.

Making a smooth transition to the new open-space building was a top priority for the Hoover staff. Only one teacher had had any experience in an open-space school. For the past five years, the school had been housed in temporary buildings where teachers were physically isolated

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[4]See Daniel L. Duke, "Developing A Comprehensive In-Service Program for School Improvement," NASSP Bulletin, forthcoming.

from one another. The prospect of sharing open-space areas with four other teachers and up to one hundred and sixty active seventh and eighth graders alarmed almost everyone involved. Although many teachers did work with the architect in designing their own instructional areas, the initial decision to build an open-space school was made by district office personnel. Most of the Hoover staff told us they did not want to work in an open-space facility and were fearful that it would undermine their instruction, discipline, and friendships with one another.

The high level of anxiety proved to be a blessing in disguise because it mobilized over half the staff to participate in the Open-Space Work/Study Team. The Open-Space Work/Study Team also had the advantages of an able and hard-working teacher chairperson and the support of Hoover's administrators. The team was formed in September, 1975, and the move to the new building was completed in May, 1976. During that period, the authors served as university members of the team.

In this paper we use the work of the Open-Space Work/Study Team as a case study to describe how our model of collaborative in-service education works. The model was implemented by our team as we prepared for (and later evaluated) the transition to open space. Since universities are relative newcomers to field-based in-service education, and school staffs are also novices in working with universities to implement school-wide in-service programs, we hope that this model will suggest some useful strategies for improving in-service education. It provides one picture of how collaboration between universities and schools can and did take place (see Figure 1).

Introducing the In-Service Topic

The first step in this model is to brief the relevant community on the in-service topic. This is the time for in-service educators to outline the dimensions of the topic and to correct any misconceptions. For example, at Hoover our introduction was a short presentation to teachers, aides, and administrators explaining that open space is an architectural term, not an instructional program, and pointing out that studies

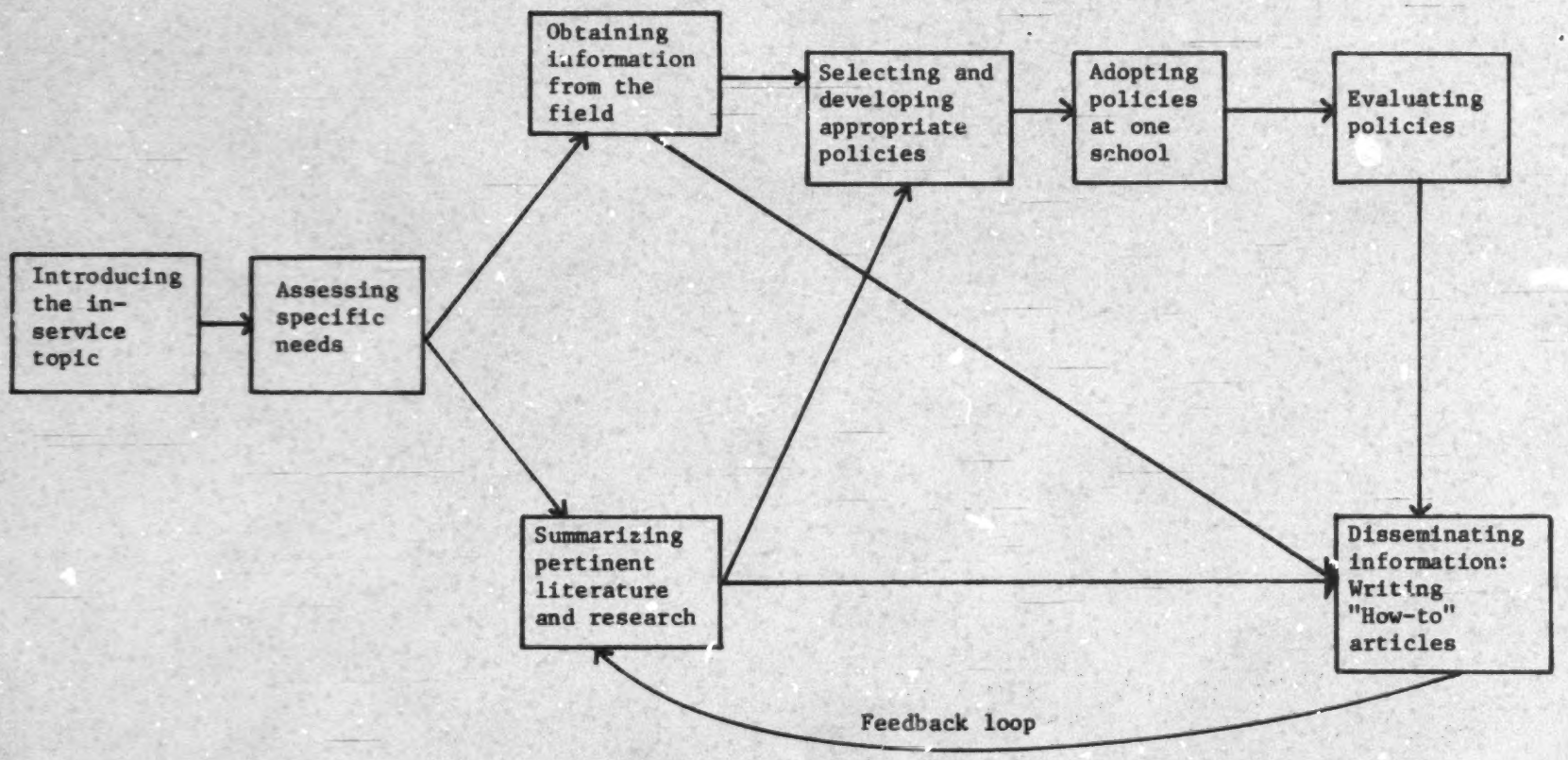
Introducing the in-service topic
Assessing specific needs
Obtaining information from the field
Selecting and developing appropriate policies
Adopting policies at one school
Evaluating policies
Summarizing pertinent literature and research
Disseminating information: Writing "How-to" articles
Feedback loop

Fig. 1. A model of collaborative in-service education.

disagree as to the effect of open space on student achievement.[5] We wanted to assure teachers that their instructional programs need not be totally changed in the new environment and that student achievement would not automatically decrease in the open-space building. We also made a similar presentation to a parents' meeting. These introductory presentations ensured that everyone was aware of some basic facts about open space.

Assessing Specific Needs

The needs assessment is the most critical step of the model because it determines the agenda for the subsequent steps. This model simply does not work if participants do not perceive or refuse to admit that the problem under consideration actually exists in their school. This is the time to gauge the level of interest and commitment of all participants. If it is low, we suggest that university participants adopt a different approach to in-service education or pack up and look for a site more compatible with their interests. Ours is a problem-centered approach, and both school and university personnel must initially agree that there is a problem.

Too often needs assessments are conducted at considerable cost in time and money and are never used by anyone except those who write a request for further funding. In our model, however, a needs assessment directs the activities of all the subsequent steps in the model. It is important to stress that needs be identified by teachers, administrators, parents, and students, and not simply by in-service educators. Although there may be common needs among faculties preparing to move into open-space schools, the idiosyncracies in each school produce different needs as well, and require somewhat different in-service efforts. By using needs assessment to set the in-service agenda, and by relying on participants to identify needs, the power over the content of the program is shifted from in-service educators to participants.

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[5]Paul S. George, "Ten Years of Open Space Schools: A Review of the Research" (Gainesville, Florida: Florida Educational Research and Development Council, 1975), p. 37.

Once needs are expressed, participants are asked to rank them according to importance. We found that if this is done at an open meeting, some disagreements can be resolved on the spot, and others at least aired. The result is a list of four or five key needs that define the activities of both the teachers and the in-service educators for the initial stages of the program. This is not to say that other needs that arise subsequently will be ignored, but that the high priority needs are the ones with which everyone begins.

At Hoover, the school staff identified their concerns about moving to an open-space school and ranked them during an in-service meeting before school opened. Parents contributed to the list of concerns at an evening workshop. Students also had a voice in the process. When we made presentations on the new open-space building to each of the social studies classes, we asked students to tell us what problems they thought might arise in the new building. Since over two-thirds of the students had attended open-space elementary schools, their ideas were especially valuable. They not only warned us all about a few points we had ignored, but gave us ideas on how to deal with some of the more common problems. For example, students suggested a number of nonverbal signals teachers can use to alert one another and students to quiet down.

The needs assessment at Hoover identified four primary concerns: (1) noise and discipline, (2) student movement, (3) use of the media center, and (4) parent and student orientation.

Summarizing Pertinent Literature and Research

The next step in the model, summarizing pertinent literature and research, was conducted simultaneously with obtaining information from the field. In both of these tasks, the needs assessment provided the structure. Our job was to find research that would provide useful information in dealing with the high priority needs at Hoover as well as to identify field sites and practitioners who could help.

We quickly discovered that most research would not give the Hoover staff the kind of assistance they wanted. One reason was that almost

all of the studies we reviewed were descriptive rather than prescriptive. For the most part, researchers attempted to answer the question "In what ways is open space different from self-contained classrooms?" While this is important, it does little to answer the question "How can teachers and students function effectively in open-space schools?" Another reason was that the complex statistical analyses, technical terms, and often dull prose of these studies were not likely to make the teachers enthusiastic consumers of research.

Despite the difficulties, we did find some useful research and pertinent literature. We summarized the major points of these articles, categorized them according to the identified needs, and prepared a separate summary for each need. For example, one study on noise levels in open space reported that noise was greatest in high density areas.[6] Partly on the basis of this finding, teachers at Hoover made plans to avoid crowding students into small areas within their open-space pod and to arrange the furniture so that all of the space was well used.

Obtaining Information from the Field

There were also problems in relying on practitioners to provide information useful to teachers. Very few administrators or teachers publish, so their expertise is unwritten. Moreover, we had trouble locating teachers and administrators who could be helpful. There was no clearinghouse in our area which identified teachers and administrators who were implementing effective instructional programs in open-space schools. In our search for these elusive "experts" we began to understand just how isolated from one another teachers and administrators are. The frustrating part of this search was that we knew there were some practitioners "out there" who were doing a good job in their open-space schools, but we did not know who they were.

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[6] Frank A. Brunetti, "Noise, Distraction and Privacy in Conventional and Open School Environments," paper prepared for the Third Annual Environmental Design Research Association Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, January 1972.

A long-term method to help identify practitioners who can help solve a particular problem is a "resource bank". Participating teachers and administrators specify their areas of competency and times when they will be available for helping their colleagues. A central coordinator matches requests for assistance with people who have the appropriate skills. This can be done on a school, district, or even state level and will greatly reduce the time and effort it presently takes to tap the expertise available in our schools. The California Teacher Corps Network has recently started a Resource Bank program.

Unfortunately, there was no resource bank at our disposal, so we relied on legwork. We visited over twenty open-space schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and interviewed as many administrators and many more teachers. Our observations and interviews were guided by the needs assessment. We wanted to know how other schools dealt with the concerns identified at Hoover. To further structure our work in this area we developed a short "Guide for Field Visits to Open-Space Schools," which listed particular things to observe and questions to ask related to specific needs.

For each of the high priority needs we also provided teachers a written summary of practices we had observed. We identified the most promising programs to the rest of the Open-Space Work/Study Team and recommended six schools as worth visiting. The district office provided the substitutes and released time necessary for visits. Hoover teachers and aides used the "Guide for Field Visits to Open-Space Schools" in their observations at these schools. In some cases they summarized their visits for the entire faculty.

The Open-Space Work/Study Team asked us to invite the best teaching teams in open-space schools that we had observed to make short presentations at Hoover. We invited three different teams, and there was general agreement that this was one of the most successful aspects of the in-service effort. This response is consistent with a study examining the credibility of various in-service educators. This study found that

> teachers are more likely to take the advice of experienced teachers who are currently teaching than other professionals who may have more specialized training but less teaching experience.[7]

At Hoover, learning from fellow teachers that extensive coordination among teachers is necessary to survive in the open-space environment was more convincing than reading or hearing it from university people--including us.

Selecting and Developing Appropriate Policies

At this point the Hoover staff was becoming very well informed about alternative ways to handle the needs they had identified. They read the short summaries of research and practices we had written and interviewed their visiting colleagues from open-space schools. Those who had visited other schools shared their observations with one another. It was clearly time to make some policies appropriate for Hoover.

Selecting and developing appropriate policies is the logical next step in our model. But logical as this seems, it appears to be an unusual sequence in in-service programs. Nicholson and Joyce conclude that "traditional in-service teacher education programs have consisted almost entirely of information-gathering activities.... Programs that stress utilization of that information ... have been distinctly in the minority."[8]

To facilitate the decision-making process, the Open-Space Work/Study Team divided into a number of subcommittees. The subcommittees were charged with making recommendations to the whole team. Each subcommittee was assigned a different high-priority need. For example, we had a subcommittee charged with formulating policies to minimize noise in the new

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[7]Vera E. Reilly and Myron H. Dembo, "Teachers' Views of Inservice Education: A Question of Confidence," Phi Delta Kappan 57 (October 1975): p. 126.

[8]Nicholson and Joyce, p. 20.

building; another to recommend procedures for effective use of the media center and procedures for student movement; and a third to plan student and parent orientation to the new building. The subcommittees sifted through the information, discarding those practices they thought inappropriate and adapting ideas from others as they wrote their recommendations. In some cases, they developed procedures not mentioned either in the literature or by visiting practitioners. For example, the social studies teachers developed a behavior checklist on which each new student behavior required in the new building was identified. Students checked off each item on the list as they completed it and turned it in to their teacher every day of the first week after the move to the new building.

As the university members of the Open-Space Work/Study Team, our roles at this step were mainly as facilitators and resource people. We made sure that each subcommittee chairperson had the relevant summaries of both research and practices, and we were occasionally called on to provide greater elaboration of these summaries. We did not decide which alternatives were appropriate at Hoover, and certainly no subcommittee member wanted us to make these decisions.

Adopting Policies

The policy adoption stage occurred in two phases. First, each subcommittee chairperson presented the subcommittee's recommendations to the Open-Space Work/Study Team. They were discussed and voted on. Second, recommendations from the Open-Space Work/Study Team were presented to the faculty for approval. Each recommendation was voted on separately. The approved recommendations included regulations for both teachers and students in the new building.

The work/study team also presented a number of informal suggestions to the faculty. For example, the subcommittee on minimizing noise recommended that all teachers begin each period with a quiet activity. But subcommittee members did not suggest that the practice be made mandatory because of their sensitivity about encroaching on the professional prerogatives of individual teachers.

It is important to point out at this step how easy it is to exclude relevant people at the policy-making and policy-adopting stages. At Hoover, students and parents received an introduction to open space and participated in the needs assessment. But only the administrators, teachers, and aides were involved in the policy formulation and adoption stage. We see that as a weakness in our program and recommend that it be avoided by others. Parents and students have more commitment to policies that they have helped formulate. Moreover, valuable ideas at the formulation and adoption stages are lost when relevant parties are excluded.

Evaluating Policies

In most in-service programs, participants assess the presentation made by the in-service educators, usually immediately after a presentation. Although it may have some value to the in-service educator in improving his or her performance before the next consulting engagement, this type of evaluation does not tell the in-service educator if any of his or her suggestions were implemented or if they were successful.

In our model, evaluation means assessing the results of the in-service program as well as the quality of the presentations. At Hoover, besides the usual evaluations of workshops and presentations, we are adopting a number of different kinds of evaluation activities. One is interviewing students after they have been in open space for at least a month to ascertain their attitudes toward the open-space environment and its management.[9] Another is asking teachers to reconsider each of the policies they have agreed on and to indicate whether they want them to be continued the following year. A third is investigating the amount and type of teacher coordination in the new building to determine whether open space actually did facilitate coordination.

We would be remiss if we did not point out that evaluating the effects of a program based on our model is a difficult job. Since there are different levels of participation among staff members, an evaluator

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[9]Mary T. Gauvain, Susan Stavert Roper, and Robert R. Nolan, "Students' Perceptions of Human Behavior and Instructional Practices in Open-Space Schools," paper to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York, April 1977.

cannot assume that there will be a uniform impact. Moreover, in a collaborative venture it is difficult to determine which individuals made the greatest contribution to program processes and outcomes. In this situation it is convenient for participants to relinquish responsibility for failure and take credit for success.

Disseminating Information: Writing "How-To" Articles

Since this collaborative model of in-service education was implemented in only one school, much of the information gathered was set aside as inappropriate to the specific site. Some of the discarded information, however, may be appropriate to teachers and administrators in other schools. We think that it is important to prevent this information from getting lost. We also think that the policies and suggestions found successful at one site should be passed on to schools in similar situations. Thus, the final step in our model is writing articles for other teachers containing practical guidelines for functioning effectively in open-space schools.

We have completed two articles, "How to Survive in the Open-Space School" and "How to Succeed in Team Teaching--By Really Trying."[10] These articles incorporate the successful practices adopted at Hoover as well as promising practices we observed elsewhere or found in the literature. The feedback loop on the model (Fig. 1) shows how these articles will become part of the literature on open space and save the time and energy of subsequent in-service educators and teachers who are preparing for the transition to an open-space environment.

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[10]Susan Stavert Roper and Robert R. Nolan, "How to Survive in the Open-Space School," Occasional Paper No. 10, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, 1976), Robert R. Nolan and Susan Stavert Roper, "How to Succeed at Team Teaching--By Really Trying," Today's Education, 66:1, Jan./Feb. 1977. A longer version was published as Occasional Paper No. 13, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, 1976). Also see Robert R. Nolan and Susan Stavert Roper, "An Administrator's Checklist For Open-Space," NASSP Bulletin, forthcoming.

Conclusions

Implementing this model for collaborative in-service education requires all participants to behave in ways that may be foreign to them. Probably the biggest shift in behavior is required of teachers. Many teachers believe their job is confined to what they do in the classroom. For these teachers, making school-wide decisions is the principal's job; in-service education is left up to the "experts." In our cooperative model, teachers become both policy makers and in-service educators. These roles are a departure from the traditional isolation of the classroom teacher. Teachers need to work together to formulate their needs, review information, make recommendations, and implement policy. This requires a lot of time as well as mutual respect. Mutual respect grew at Hoover as the school staff worked together and learned that their best resources for improving the school were often one another. In just one academic year, teachers assumed the responsibility for planning their own in-service program and made significant school-wide decisions.

Given the expansion of teachers' activities, administrators who operate within our model must also change their behavior. They must become coordinators rather than directors. Since they are in a position to know more about different aspects of a program than are teachers who are concentrating on one dimension, it is their responsibility to keep the staff informed of the overall progress and problems of the in-service program. We think that the administrators at Hoover, of all participants in the program, were most pleased by their new role. They seemed delighted to see teachers so actively engaged in this program. We heard no complaints that teachers had overstepped their bounds or that the power of the administrator was undermined. The role of coordinator is every bit as demanding and important as that of director, and the administrators at Hoover seemed to find it a satisfying one.

In our model the behavior of university participants is also atypical. Working with the Hoover staff on this project was unlike any other consulting experience we have had. For one thing, it was a long term commitment--a big change from the three-hour workshop or one-day visit. For another, after the first week, we were not interacting with strangers.

Most important, we were not expected to have all the answers or to formulate all the questions. When we did offer advice, it was in an informal setting and was presented along with other sources of information. At times we were full time "go-fers"--finding people, articles, and ideas that might be useful to the staff. At other times, we were group facilitators--developing agendas with our work/study team chairperson, reminding teachers of meeting times, and encouraging everyone to voice his or her opinion. But at no time did we assume the role of sole decision maker.

Perhaps our greatest asset was the luxury of having a single task. Our job at Hoover was to help prepare the staff for functioning effectively in the new open-space building. Teachers and administrators had to contribute to this effort after a full day's demanding work. Furthermore, as members of other work/study teams of the Teacher Corps Project, they were grappling with additional pressing issues such as curriculum reform and learning problems. Thus we alone could concentrate most of our time and energies on the area of open space.

At Stanford we had access to computers for literature searches, extensive library materials, and the enormously useful advice from colleagues who had conducted research on open-space schools for a decade. Trained as researchers, we were able to evaluate the quality of relevant studies. Our background as former teachers helped us choose the information that would be useful to the practitioner.

There has been much talk in recent years of improving in-service education by developing better relationships between schools and universities. This will not happen unless university personnel come down from the ivory tower and treat the practitioner as a colleague rather than a client or a subject for research. This model is one way of establishing collegiality in in-service education.